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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 0023

RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0036

RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0007

RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0013

RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0184

RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 0010

RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 0021

RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 0049

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1152

RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 0012

RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 0005

RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO 0166

RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0021

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DOHA 000235

SIPDIS

DHAKA FOR P/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/01/2019

TAGS: PREL KPAL WBG XR AL OA SU

SUBJECT: IN THE SHADOW OF AL-BASHIR AND CHAVEZ, ARAB AND SOUTH AMERICAN LEADERS MEET IN DOHA

REF: A. DOHA 222

1B. DOHA 188

1C. DOHA 192

1D. BRASILIA 391

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

(SBU) KEY POINTS

-- 12 South American leaders gathered in Doha March 31 with 14 Arab heads of state or government and 8 other Arab delegates for the Second Arab-South America Summit, held immediately after the Arab League Summit (Ref A).

-- Highlights from the final statement appear in the main text below. On several critical issues, the statement resembled the Doha Declaration issued at the end of the Arab League Summit, though without statement in support of indicted Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir.

-- Individual South American leaders were not reluctant, however, to take positions on the Bashir indictment, with Venezuelan President Chavez calling it a "farce."

-- In his latest effort to undercut the U.S. position in the world economy, a typically bombastic Chavez called for a "petro-currency" to replace the dollar. There was no indication that this proposal gained any support.

(C) COMMENTS AND ANALYSIS

-- Despite the passing references to food security made in the final statement, Qatar in particular sees a strong link between the food security problems of the Arab states and the energy security issues that face most of South America. As an MFA official told us, "they need energy, we need food" (Ref B). We expect to see Qatar, and perhaps other Arab states, increase their energy links with South America in the coming years, and for them to increase their investments in the South American agriculture sectors at the same time.

-- The Summit condemned Israeli policy in Gaza and U.S. policy towards Syria. It appears, as predicted by Embassy Brasilia in Ref D, that South American leaders could not resist Arab pressures to adopt language similar to that adopted in previous ministerial meetings they have held with Arab leaders under the dialogue established in Brasilia in 2005.

-- Contrary to the fears expressed by senior Qatari officials in advance of the Summit, the presence of indicted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir did not appear to be an issue for the South American leaders. This is in spite of the fact that nearly all of their countries are signatories to the ICC statute.

End Key Points, Comments, and Analysis.

¶1. (SBU) The Second Arab-South America Summit was held in Doha on March 31. Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Arab League, and Chilean President Michelle Bachelet delivered opening remarks on behalf of the South American states.

¶2. (SBU) With characteristic bombast, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez used the Summit to blast the U.S. and Israel. "The time has come for the final fall of the American empire," he roared. He used the forum to urge the adoption of an alternative reserve currency to replace the dollar, but there was no indication that his proposal gained much

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support.

¶3. (SBU) Whether the presence of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir would cause some South American leaders to skip the summit had been a major concern of senior Qatari officials before the Summit, but it did not. The final statement did not, however, contain language in support of al-Bashir such as that found in the Arab League final statement of the day before. One leader was clearly uncomfortable with al-Bashir.

Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner excused herself from the conference room rather than appear in a photo with al-Bashir.

¶4. (SBU) Chavez, on the other hand, was not shy about his support for al-Bashir. On his arrival in Doha, Chavez commented that the ICC had "no power to take such an action against a sitting president. It does so because it is an African country, a Third World country. Why don't they order the arrest of (former U.S. President) Bush? Why don't they order the arrest of the Israeli President (Shimon Peres)?"

¶5. (U) Following are highlights of the "Doha Declaration" issued at the close of the March 31 Arab-South America Summit:

GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS: The Arab and South American leaders expressed their deep concern over the current financial crisis and its impact on the world's poor. They called for the establishment of a world financial system that prevents financial speculation and provides for adequate regulation, and the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the UN to discuss the crisis.

FALKLANDS DISPUTE: The statement calls upon the leaders of Argentina and the UK - to resume negotiations in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute referred to as "Question of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands," in accordance with the many relevant UN Resolutions.

FOOD SECURITY: The leaders recognized "the imperative need to coordinate policies that guarantee food security and food sovereignty for all populations as well as timely and permanent access to food, and to enhance cooperation in rural development, so as to improve productivity in food

production." They also emphasized their commitment to strengthen the committee on World Food Security as the international forum for combating food insecurity.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION: Arab and South American leaders expressed their support for the ongoing trade negotiations between MERCOSUR and Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, and the separate effort between MERCOSUR and the GCC to create a free trade zone. They also pledged their support for any of their number seeking accession to the WTO.

COOPERATION IN THE ENERGY SECTOR: The leaders pledged to "foster the building of mechanisms for cooperation and information-sharing in the sector of oil, natural gas and other energy resources, including exchange of technical expertise, technology transfer, and human resources training." They also pledged their support on alternative energy, including biofuels.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COOPERATION: The leaders pledged their future cooperation in the areas of science and technology, and through cultural and religious exchanges. They expressed their support for the UN Alliance of Civilizations Initiative and for Saudi King Abdullah's call for closer dialogue among the world's religions. They urged all Arab and South American nations to attend the Second Meeting of the Ministers of Culture to be held in Rio de Janeiro on May 20-21, 2009.

ISRAEL/PALESTINE: The leaders "deplored" the recent Israeli
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military operation in Gaza, and called for the immediate reopening of all border crossings between Israel and Gaza. The leaders further called for a just and sustainable peace based upon the principle of land for peace. They called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the borders as they existed before 4 June 1967. They also expressed support for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority.

LEBANON/SYRIA: Leaders called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories in Lebanon and Syria, and called the U.S. "Syria Accountability Act" a violation of international law and an unjustified burden on the Syrian people and economy.

SUDAN: The final statement did not mention the ICC arrest warrant currently pending against Sudanese President al-Bashir, but praised the efforts of Qatar, the Arab League, and the African Union to solve the crisis. It urged rebel factions in Sudan to support the peace process.

IRAQ: The leaders reaffirmed their support for the unity, freedom, sovereignty, and independence of Iraq and its right to be free from interference in its internal affairs. They also expressed their respect for the right of the Iraqi people to freely decide their own future, and condemned the acts of terrorism and violence that affect them.

IRAN: Like the Declaration issued at the close of the Arab League, the final statement avoided the issue of Iran's nuclear program and instead called upon it to respond positively to the UAE initiative aimed at resolving their sovereignty dispute over three UAE islands.

TERRORISM: The statement condemned terrorism in all its forms, and rejected "any linkage between terrorism and a specific people or religion, ethnicity or culture."

NUCLEAR ISSUES: The Arab and South American leaders maintained "that regional security and stability in the Middle East require that the whole region be free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction." They called upon all regional states to accede to the NPT, and to place all of their nuclear facilities under the comprehensive IAEA

safeguards. The leaders reaffirmed "that the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is the inalienable right of the parties to the NPT, and applying this right in a discriminatory or selective way, especially to the states parties, will affect the credibility of the treaty." They also stressed the disarmament requirement of the NPT, and called upon the nuclear weapons states to carry out that obligation in good faith.

LeBaron